

Eastern MRS Meeting Notes
November 30, 2006
Washington County DSS

Counties Present: Brunswick, Craven, Cumberland, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Pasquotank, Washington, Wayne, Wilson.

Introductions

News

Report on:

- 7 Strategies
- Assignment of cases
- Switching tracks
- Blended caseloads
- Shared Parenting

DCD letter will be coming out addressing Court of Appeals decision overturning a Pender Co abuse case. This will have some implications for our practice. Not a tremendous impact. Important when you are filing petitions that they uphold the legal definition of abuse.

News - from the Differential Response Conference in San Diego How are other states doing and how does NC compare? (Will have several people come to the January meeting and report out about this.)

- Only 15 states doing differential response as defined by the federal government
- Missouri and Minnesota are still seen as the pioneers and the leaders here. But some people are starting to see that NC is in there too.
- AFI presented on the principles of partnership
- Catawba and Guilford presented as well

Reporting out on progress on the 7 strategies:

- Collaboration between CPS and Work First
- Structured Intake unless there are issues, this is a freebie everyone is doing it
- Dual Response
- Collaboration with Law Enforcement
- In Home Redesign
- Child & Family Teams
- Shared Parenting

Note on In-Home Redesign this reflects our hope for overall system change. For in-home the difference is how often you see the high and intensive risk cases versus the moderate and low. This applies the most resources to cases with the highest need.

Washington

CPS/WE have developed a policy waiting on Directors approval

Dual Response since January of 06

Law Enforcement - new sheriff, have had a lot of turnover with law enforcement agencies. However the memorandum of agreement is ready to go.

In Home redesign going well allowing input from the family. Sometimes it is a challenge to step back and let the families try their own ideas. They may seem odd sometimes but the family is their own expert and a lot of time they do work.

CFT both assessors trained as facilitators so they can facilitate each others cases. Or if each person has history with the family someone else will do it.

SP nothing as of yet, had no kids in care lately.

Hertford implemented April 06, all the pieces are coming together and feel they are making steady progress

CPS/WE

Dual Response

Law Enforcement - good rapport with sheriffs department and have had that. Go on joint visits when necessary. Have a memorandum of agreement that predates MRS

In Home redesign

CFT .

SP good start, will take some time to get it going

Wayne started March 06

CPS/WE struggled to try and set up joint appointments. Would like to cross train and have started putting this into place

Dual Response doing this, working well. Family assessors carry case management for moderate risk cases. Started all separate but then went to blending this way. Limit these folks to 12 cases - if they have that many open they won't get assigned any more. Sometimes will keep a high or intensive case as well.

Law Enforcement - working on this, they have a lot of turnover as well

In Home redesign going well

CFT working well bringing families to the table and putting them in control. They were an FFK county so this was not totally new to them. Have had lots of compliments from the families. Very rewarding and healing for parents to have older children be able to speak.

SP started slow and the workers haven't completely gotten it, but they are progressing. Have had one really good success with a woman who had a new child but a good relationship with the foster parent of her other 2 children that had been TPRed (that foster parent is going to adopt those children). They even spent Thanksgiving together.

Brunswick

CPS/WE still want to work on this area

Dual Response yes

Law Enforcement - no problem with getting responses, but if it goes into investigation with a criminal piece timely contact may be difficult.

In Home redesign going well

CFT very well, use a mediation center and waiver money. Often combine with PPATs

SP somewhat of a struggle because they have foster parents that have been doing this for a long time and can't quite get the change in philosophy. (Although they do have some that are embracing it.) So, are actively recruiting new foster parents that will only be familiar with the new philosophy.

Wilson

CPS/WF fairly well, started getting a report form WF that shows active cases so that CPS can use them as a collateral. Not a large WF caseload in their county

Dual Response doing it since Oct 04

Law Enforcement - do not actually have an MOA. Law enforcement seems to be reluctant to charge people. Juvenile detectives are excellent, they go to interviews and come to staffings.

In Home redesign Joint teams, staff all cases together

CFT do well, have them frequently in the home, 2 full time facilitators, develop case plans here as they are supposed to.

SP Some that are really good. Some foster parents and social workers still need a little more buy-in.

Craven

CPS/WF don't attend a lot of each other's meeting but they do communicate well. Sometimes hard for WF to attend CFTs because they are after 5.

Dual Response 75-80% of eligible family assessments are taken as such

Law Enforcement - still have room for improvement here, have some conflicts between each agency's policies.

In Home redesign fine

CFT two case mgmt supervisors do the facilitating for high and intensive and they do the ones for the other team. Workers do their own for moderate risk.

SP made a lot of progress here. Long term foster parents that are more comfortable are the most at ease with it. A lot of new foster parents are too. Have some continuing relationships after the kids have gone home.

Cumberland (see Central Meeting Notes for more information)

Dual Response out of 200 CPS social workers have about 10 doing family assessments. Going to be redesigning and moving units beginning tomorrow.

Law Enforcement - great collaboration with most agencies.

In Home redesign making progress with changing philosophy but has been a struggle.

Hyde

CPS/WF did a protocol which is working well. Are now in the same building. Have a process for alerting each other about new cases to see if families are receiving both services.

Dual Response working on it. Feel good about family assessments. Only done one but only get a very few reports per month.

Law Enforcement - things always change with a new sheriff they have just elected a former sheriff so they feel good about this.

In Home redesign

CFT .

SP no kids in care right now. Have worked with an adoptive child that had to come from one home into another

Martin

CPS/WF goes well, WF unit restructuring right now

Dual Response only have 3 IATs, try to do family assessment almost always where policy allows

Law Enforcement - new sheriff, have to develop the relationship

In Home redesign going ok

CFT hiring a full time facilitator, just finished the job description. Hope to have them in place by February which will help them with CFT and SP.

SP see note above

Pasquotank

CPS/WF going well

Dual Response well

Law Enforcement - great, better with the county than the local police

In Home redesign going well

CFT just recently started, have a full time facilitator

SP lot of new foster parents, have some work to do here.

Wherever you are in your practice is ok, as long as you know where you are and are aware of what needs to be done.

Note on collaboration between WF and CPS Tony Amos suggested having a powerpoint that illustrates CPS 101 and WF 101. You will always have new workers, but if you have this, there is already something in place for new people to get a basic understanding. Also stressed the importance of knowing your Work First plan.

- Washington has a written policy which they will email to Holly.
- There may be a family that does not get WF for some reason and they may have come to DSS through CPS but if they meet the 200% poverty requirement they can get some WF services if CPS refers them.

Assignment of cases if there are cases that would be eligible for family assessment but you have decided in your county that you are taking them as investigative, why and which ones?

Brunswick severe drug stuff (drug bust, etc.), some marks, bruising, depending on the situation

Wilson have had a lot of discussion about certain types of cases such as mental health issues with violent tendencies, may be able to change to family assessment once they get in there, but will probably start as investigative

Wayne DV cases with weapons

Herford no blanket policy but have done some on a case by case basis

Washington go by policy, but of their abuse cases almost all are sexual abuse. They do have a lot of discussion when there is a DV case to see if that particular case needs to go investigative. DV with weapons or severe injuries go investigative. They have discussions internally before they go out.

Pasquotank serious DV, may decide to initiate as investigation and switch later

Martin most that can be are family assessment. Look at case by case if there might be reason to bump it up and talk about it internally.

Craven serious DV and drug cases. Also if the child appears to be afraid of the parents and the information leads them to think that there may be a basis for this.

Hyde Inappropriate discipline because of the history of the county and its cultural characteristics. (Community belief in spare the rod and spoil the child type philosophy)

Cumberland started with all DV, but have backed off.

Switching tracks what makes you switch other than when you start with a family assessment and something develops that mandates a switch (by policy)?

- Recall that you cannot switch at the point of case decision. You should take this as a sign that you should staff cases differently to catch this. Also, if you get to this point, and you feel very strongly that someone needs to be on the RIL, you need to delay case decision so you are not surprising the family with one finding when you have presented the assessment process to them a different way.
- Also need to understand that family centered practice can be and should be used in either track.

Wilson tend to switch down to family assessment when the facts show that the case is not really abuse as it may have been reported. They staff cases every week and this helps them keep up with the status of a case and if it needs to switch they can do this at an appropriate time and not wait until the point of case decision.

Craven have switched both ways. Bumped up a neglect to serious based on a pattern.

- Goes in the narrative as a two level decision when this happens.
- Holly hears that people are uncomfortable bumping cases down after initiation because they feel that initiation is the place where you get the biggest benefit of family assessment. However, there are other reasons to bump down. Can get some services for the family and then do not have to make a finding that labels them as a perpetrator.

Blended Caseloads Wayne, Cumberland, Martin are blending at some level
Wilson and Craven tried it and went back.

Wilson felt that workers would miss the standards involved with case management when they were also doing assessments (their workers do both types of assessments and it just seemed to be too much). But since they are blended teams, they still have the capacity. Tried it for about 7 months.

Craven did it about 6 months. Caseloads got too high, treatment went on the back burner and therefore stayed open longer. Also, they don't have an on-call worker so people were having to rotate into that.

What are barriers?

- Caseload Size - If your caseloads are high, you need to look at why they are high. Holly recognizes that SW want the families to be perfect before they step out of the case, but really need to look at cases that have been open and critically evaluate the cases and decide if, although these families are not perfect, are they really at a level of risk that CPS needs to be involved? Don't open cases that don't need to be open, and close them when it is time to close them. Are these seriously candidates for foster care??
- Counties that have blended and finding that case management cases that were a part of blended caseloads tended to stay open an less time. Part of this was frontloading services, and part of this is the family not having to get used to a new person and not having to tell stories all over again.

Other comments

- A blended caseworker likes it because she feels like she becomes an expert for that family and thinks that works in the best interest of the family. If it does go to court, she knows everything, and the family can't play one worker against the other because there was only one and so there is no potential lapse in communication between workers for the family to use as an excuse.
- Often workers in blended caseloads feel that they are not able to make their required visits for case management because of getting the new assessments. Many times the statistics show that they ARE making the contacts, they just feel like they are not.

Shared Parenting

- Having Foster Parents do a lot with the biological parents (once appropriate) saves the agency time and money, and also sends a message to the family if there is a meeting w/o the social worker that they are doing ok.
- Foster Parents make good mentors.
- Brunswick is preparing a campaign that they are presenting more as mentoring than as foster parents. This also cuts down on foster parents who expect adoption - mentoring gives the idea more up front that you are mentoring with the aim of reunification.
- Shared Parenting can also serve to rein in foster parents that may get carried away and take things farther than perhaps the court order allows.

Future Meetings

January:

Eastern Pitt Co Ag Ext Jan 30th
Central Rowan Co Library Jan 22nd

February:

Eastern Wilson Co Feb 28th
Central - Guilford - Feb 22nd

Feb 2nd Alamance Co Pilot meeting